



## Bulletin

# European Destinations of Excellence

**ONLINE BULLETIN ON BULGARIAN EDEN DESTINATIONS, CREATED UNDER THE PROJECT ENTITLED "COMMUNICATION CAMPAIGN TO PROMOTE BULGARIAN EDEN DESTINATIONS – SECOND EDITION", AS IMPLEMENTED BY THE MINISTRY OF TOURISM UNDER A GRANT FINANCIAL AID AGREEMENT WITH THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION NO 699265 OF JAN 18, 2016**

**(issue 8, October 2016)**

### NEWS AND EVENTS RELATING TO PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION



**The Ministry of Tourism presented the project entitled Communication Campaign to Promote Bulgarian EDEN Destinations – Second Edition during the Green Days exhibition festival**

In the course of Ministry of Tourism's participation in the Green Days exhibition festival during the period 30.09.2016-02.10.2016, the Ministry project for promoting the Bulgarian EDEN destinations was presented. In Bulgaria the EDEN destinations are 12 and have been selected within the framework of 3 national Excellence Tourism Destination competitions themed: cultural tourism, protected areas, and aquatic tourism. The destinations are: Belogradchik, Silistra, Lukovit, Sandanski, Kyustendil, Belitsa, Sapareva Banya, Kavarna, Vratsa, Strandja national park, Kazanlak, and Kardjali.

Presentation of the EDEN destinations during the exhibition was another opportunity to introduce them to both the general public, as well as to professionals involved in tourism (tour operators, sustainable tourism organizations, etc.).

Presentation of the project during the exhibition is part of the overall promotion campaign for the EDEN destinations and is a prerequisite for effective advertising of these destinations on the local market and redirection/generation of extra tourist interest in them.



## **PRESENTATION OF EDEN DESTINATIONS**

*According to tradition, we will be presenting to you one Bulgaria EDEN destination in each bulletin issues. For this issue we have planned to familiarize you with the **Belitsa** EDEN destination*

### **Belitsa**

Belitsa is located in South-western Bulgaria, virtually on a cross-road between the mountains of Rila, Pirin, and Rhodopi, taking up a part of the Rila national park. What is of interest to tourists in this destination are the extraordinary natural places, the Semkovo mountain resort, the only South-European Dancing Bears Re-adaptation Park, the preserved residential architecture from the Bulgarian National Revival period, archaeological monuments, Thracian shrines, the region's ethnographic and folklore riches. The beautiful, preserved nature enables Belitsa to offer attractive opportunities for active and pleasant individual and group recreation for the lovers of ecotourism and hobby tourism. Biodiversity is interpreted, 6 pedestrian eco-paths have been marked in the Musala part of Rila mountain, two of these paths go into Rila national park territory. Each eco-route is dedicated to a certain main theme – Temple of Antiquity, the Charm of the Peat Bog, the Glacier Traces, the Lord of Mountains, the Keeper of Life, and the Flying Flowers.

You will be returning to Belitsa each season because it has a lot to offer and because the experience in Belitsa is unforgettable and beneficial!

The Thracian settlement is an unmissable part of Belitsa's history. Some of the oldest traces of human civilization dating back to the Neolithic era have been discovered in this region. An ancient burial mound located in the area of Thracian shrines in the high-altitude Babyashka Chuka locality, north of Belitsa, was discovered here.

For the history junkies, the Belitsa culture centre maintains one of the largest ethnographic museums in Bulgaria – with the time frame of the exhibits ranging from the Thracian and Roman times all the way to the 1944 Soviet declaration of war on Bulgaria.

Belitsa is the ideal place for alpine sports fans, as it has a rich history in sports disciplines such as skiing and pedestrian tourism. The Semkovo mountain resort, which is located 17 km from the town, rises to 600 m elevation and attracts visitors year-round. The government has created a number of eco-paths passing through some of our country's most pristine spots.

## **What makes Belitsa special?**

The dancing bears park is one of Belitsa's "merry" attractions. It is the largest of its kind in Europe and is home to a growing population of rescued bears, which are being prepared for a return to their natural habitat. The park is sponsored by the Brigitte Bardot Foundation and Belitsa Municipality.

The trip to Belitsa would not be complete if you don't try the delicious local dishes and don't enjoy the post-dinner merry-making. The visit to any of the old-style restaurants in the town, where you can try Mediterranean dishes, concludes with traditional Belitsa songs being sung around the tables.

Belitsa is a town immersed in history and the Municipality has taken the steps required to keep things that way. Environmental issues are always on the agenda, while new steps in environment protection are ever-improving.

Life in Belitsa is bustling year-round for festivals and various events are organized in the town all the time. The region is inhabited by both Muslims and Christians, whose religious rituals bring liveliness during the celebrations.

### **Main contact information for the destination:**

#### **Georgi Todorov 1885 Public Reading Hall, town of Belitsa**

tel. + 359 7444 2227, + 359 885 006891,  
e-mail: [maiazvetan@abv.bg](mailto:maiazvetan@abv.bg); [eden@belitsa.com](mailto:eden@belitsa.com),  
<http://library.belitsa.com/>; <http://www.belitsa.com/>

#### **Tourism Information Centre, Museum – town of Belitsa**

2780 Belitsa, 8, Georgi Andreychin St.  
Tel/fax: + 359 7444 2815; Coordinator: + 359 885 006891; Guide: + 359 882 030909; Museum procurator: + 359 882 030909  
e-mail: [eden@belitsa.com](mailto:eden@belitsa.com)

### **Destination-popular events:**

#### **February – Winter celebration – Semkovo-Belitsa**

A two-day winter celebration involving Belitsa locals and visitors. The celebration features entertaining sports competitions, games, and performances by amateurs from the municipality and the region. It is held in the Semkovo resort. [maiazvetan@abv.bg](mailto:maiazvetan@abv.bg)

### **Recommended site-seeing:**



#### **Dancing Bears Park**

The Dancing Bears Re-adaptation Park is located in the southern part of Rila mountain near Belitsa, and takes up an area of 120 000 sq. m. The biggest credit for its establishment goes to the Four Paws Foundation – Austria, the Brigitte Bardot Foundation – France, and Belitsa Municipality. It was developed with walk and solace mounds, lawns, and sunny spots for resting, swimming lakes, and sleeping dens, with the aid of globally renowned experts studying the brown bear's behaviour and habits.

Tours are arranged every half hour.

April-June: 12:00 - 18:00 hrs.

July-August: 10:00 - 12:00 hrs.; 13:00 - 18:00 hrs..

September - November: 12:00 - 18:00ч.

The Dancing Bears Re-adaptation Park is located in the wooded slopes of the southern part of Rila mountain, in the Adrianov Chark locality, 12 km away from the town of Belitsa.

Contacts: e-mail: [dimitar.ivanov@vier-pfoten.org](mailto:dimitar.ivanov@vier-pfoten.org)

<http://park.belitsa.com/>

**Georgi Todorov Reading Hall** was established in 1885 and is the natural culture centre of the town of Belitsa and the environs, which has preserved local traditions and customs. The adjacent museum collection has put together the past and present of this small town. The region's cultural heritage is presented in thematic exhibitions divided into Archaeology, Bulgarian National Revival, Ethnography, Picture Gallery, New Belitsa, and an Exhibition Bazaar for local crafts. You will also see a unique Thracian sarcophagus dated back to circa 2500 BC.

<http://library.belitsa.com/>



### **Saint George 1835 church**

Belitsa symbol is the Holy Martyr George church. It was constructed during 1833-1835 on an elevated and visible spot above the town centre. The temple is thus visible from everywhere. (GPS 41° 57' 5" (41.951384°) northern latitude 23° 33' 33" (23.559108°) eastern longitude)

Furthermore, the oldest building in the town – the Saint Demetar church, which was built in 1716, also draws interest.



### **Semkovo mountain resort**

The Semkovo mountain resort is located in the Semkovi Polyani locality, Middle Rila. It is 16 km north of town of Belitsa, elevation 1550–1600. It comprises a complex of buildings – hotels, resort stations, a villa area, ski tracks, catering establishments, and others, all located on a huge meadow with a southern-oriented view. It is surrounded on all sides by a pine forest, behind which high peaks of the Eastern, Middle, and South-western Rila rise, and

the cirque lake groups located in between. Semkovo is a mountain resort for ski- and snowboard tourism, a vacation and recreation place year-round. Semkovo has seven ski tracks of total length 4 km, which are serviced by 8 ski ropes. (GPS 42° 2' 42" (42.044895°) northern latitude 23° 31' 35" (23.526342°) eastern longitude)

<http://www.belitsa.com/bg/turizam-v-belitsa/semkovo>



[belitsa/vodopad-kazanite](http://www.belitsa.com/bg/belitsa/vodopad-kazanite)

### **Kazanite waterfalls and Stenitsi locality**

Being a genuine pearl in Rila mountain's crown, Belitsa is dotted with lakes, rivers, waterfalls, clear-water brooks and streams. Just meters away, right on the road to the Semkovo resort, is the location of the Kazanite (the Cauldrons) waterfalls – a group of cauldron-shaped waterfalls flowing into one another and forming a complete chain. You can enjoy the high natural cliffs and their peculiar rock figures, which rise around the waterfalls.

<http://www.belitsa.com/bg/belitsa/svobodno-vreme-v->

### **Belitsa rocks**

Belitsa rocks are located 7 km. away from Belitsa and take up an area of 55 decares. They are rock formations with vertical walls and several stone mushrooms. The cliff ridge is cut by the water, thereby forming a little canyon.

GPS coordinates (GPS 42° 0' 21" (42.005874°) northern latitude 23° 31' 32" (23.525505°) eastern longitude)

Suitable for visiting from March to September.

<http://www.belitsa.com/bg/belitsa/svobodno-vreme-v-belitsa/belishki-skali>



### **Cirque lake groups**

Groups of lakes are located in the higher part of Rila mountain, they can be reached via marked paths:

**Vapski lakes** - GPS 42° 4' 51" (42.080897°) northern latitude 23° 31' 11" (23.519776°) eastern longitude

**Dry lake** - GPS 42° 4' 21" (42.072392°) northern latitude 23° 33' 20" (23.555675°) eastern longitude

**Skalishki lakes** - GPS 42° 4' 45" (42.079177°) northern latitude 23° 30' 7" (23.501859°) eastern longitude

**Chernopolyanski lakes** - GPS 42° 5' 19" (0°) northern latitude 23° 29' 25" (23.490272°) eastern longitude

Suitable for visiting from March to September.



### **Rila national park**

<http://bulgariatravel.org/bg/object/354/>

Nacionalen park Rila

Bulgaria's largest national park with an area of 81 046,0 hectares. It is located 100 km south of Sofia, in the central and highest parts of Rila mountain. It preserves: self-regulating ecosystems of notable biodiversity; shared habitats of rare and endangered species; historical monuments of global significance for science and culture. Some of the biggest and longest rivers on the Balkan peninsula spring from here. Rila national park is a member of the

network of preserved European territories of parks, PAN Parks, and plays an important part of the European eco network Natura 2000 for habitat preservation.

Contacts: Rila National Park directorate

Head office, Blagoevgrad, tel.: 073/ 88 05 37, fax: 073/ 88 10 23

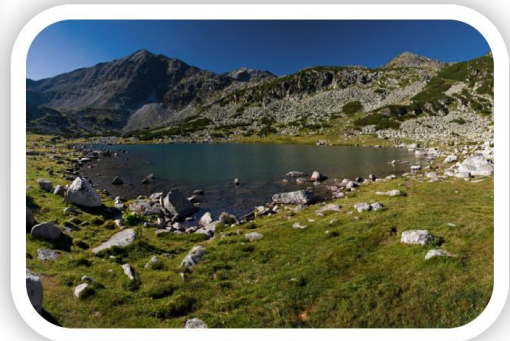
e-mail: [office@rilanationalpark.bg](mailto:office@rilanationalpark.bg)

[www.rilanationalpark.bg](http://www.rilanationalpark.bg)

**Park office, Belitsa:** tel.: 0884 111 402

## Rope attraction, Semkovo resort complex

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*This material was created within the framework of the project entitled Communication Campaign to Promote Bulgarian EDEN Destinations – Second Edition, under a Grant Financial Aid Agreement No 699265 of Jan 18, 2016, as implemented with the financial support of the EU's COSME (2014-2020) program. The contents of this material presents the views of the Ministry of Tourism only and is the latter's full responsibility; this document should not be deemed to represent the official opinion of the European Commission and/or the Bulgarian Small and Medium Enterprises Promotion Agency, or any other EU body. The European Commission and the Agency bear no responsibility for the benefit, which will be created out of the information contained in the document.*